

5 September 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with Ross Starek and Tina Yamamoto  
on 5 September 1975 in 5G-00

1. The following subjects were covered in the course of one hour and fifteen minutes:

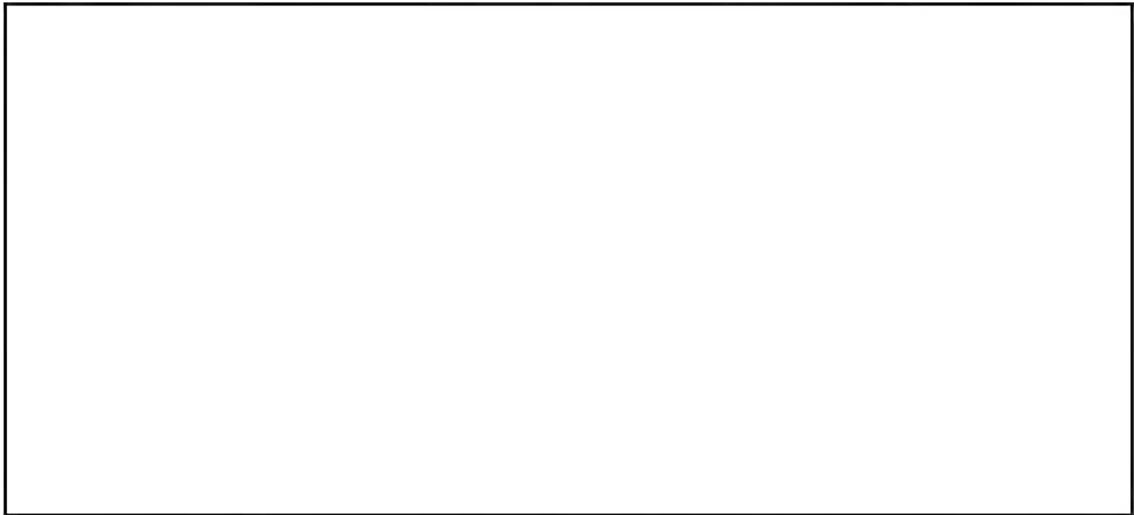
a. Estimates. I told them these were human documents and often reflected the times and personalities rather than absolute truth. Nevertheless, estimates represented a reasonable attempt by a group of professionals to tell the policy makers on a given issue how things were and make a guess at what was going to happen. Whether policy makers used them was essentially their business. In the China field, it was my view that, policy makers did not rely on estimates to any great extent. Estimates at times reflected the opinions of the strong-minded and persuasive debator who sometimes won the arguments but occasionally lost sight of reality. In reflecting the trend of the times, for instance, China was evil in the '50s and early '60s therefore the estimates contained more perjorative terms. Also they often recapitulated the obvious, and they could be wrong. Here I gave them some examples. I also said estimates could be right and gave them some additional examples. For instance, on estimates on Chinese need for chemical fertilizer.

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c. They asked about my relations with other agencies of government. I told them that these were pretty much what I made them and depended on me, and not on my title or job. I explained to them that although I found areas in the community where there was duplication and redundancy I was able to do little about them right now. In this respect, a careful judgment had to be made between healthy competition of two groups handling the same subject, and wasteful duplication. At Mr. Colby's suggestion I was wrestling with this problem. I pointed out that other intelligence organizations had departmental needs and departmental command lines which transcended my well-intentioned suggestions for improving the product and analyses and eliminating waste.

2. I said policy makers were interested in strategic weaponry and conventional forces and that a majority of the funds and efforts went into the covering of these two subjects. There was less emphasis on political and economic matters on China. Starek seemed to be seized with this and said he thought more effort should go into economic coverage. I said the threat came from weapons and this was the area where the Chinese were the least revealing. Hence, our substantial effort. He asked about exchange of information with the U. S. Government community. I said the flow was quite good but everybody held something back, NSC, NSA, State, DOD and DDO.

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3. He asked about political assessments of China. I said these sometimes suffered from "one-dimensionalism" -- or simplifying complicated situations for policy makers by using American models which did not fit the Chinese scene. There were instances where writers in the U.S. Government were known to have said things which they knew would please their leaders. These were human frailties and were balanced by excellent analysis done by qualified people who had access to the best information.

4. Neither Mr. Starek nor Ms. Yamamoto had read any of the China NIEs so this inhibited the usefulness of our exchanges.

5. Starek asked what I would recommend to cure some of the problems noted above. I said a DCI who was placed in a strong position as recommended in the Murphy Commission report. He seemed to agree.

[Redacted]  
James R. Liley  
National Intelligence Officer  
for China

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